



# Palace of Baldu

Patrimonio culturale  
**SARDEGNA** Virtual Archaeology

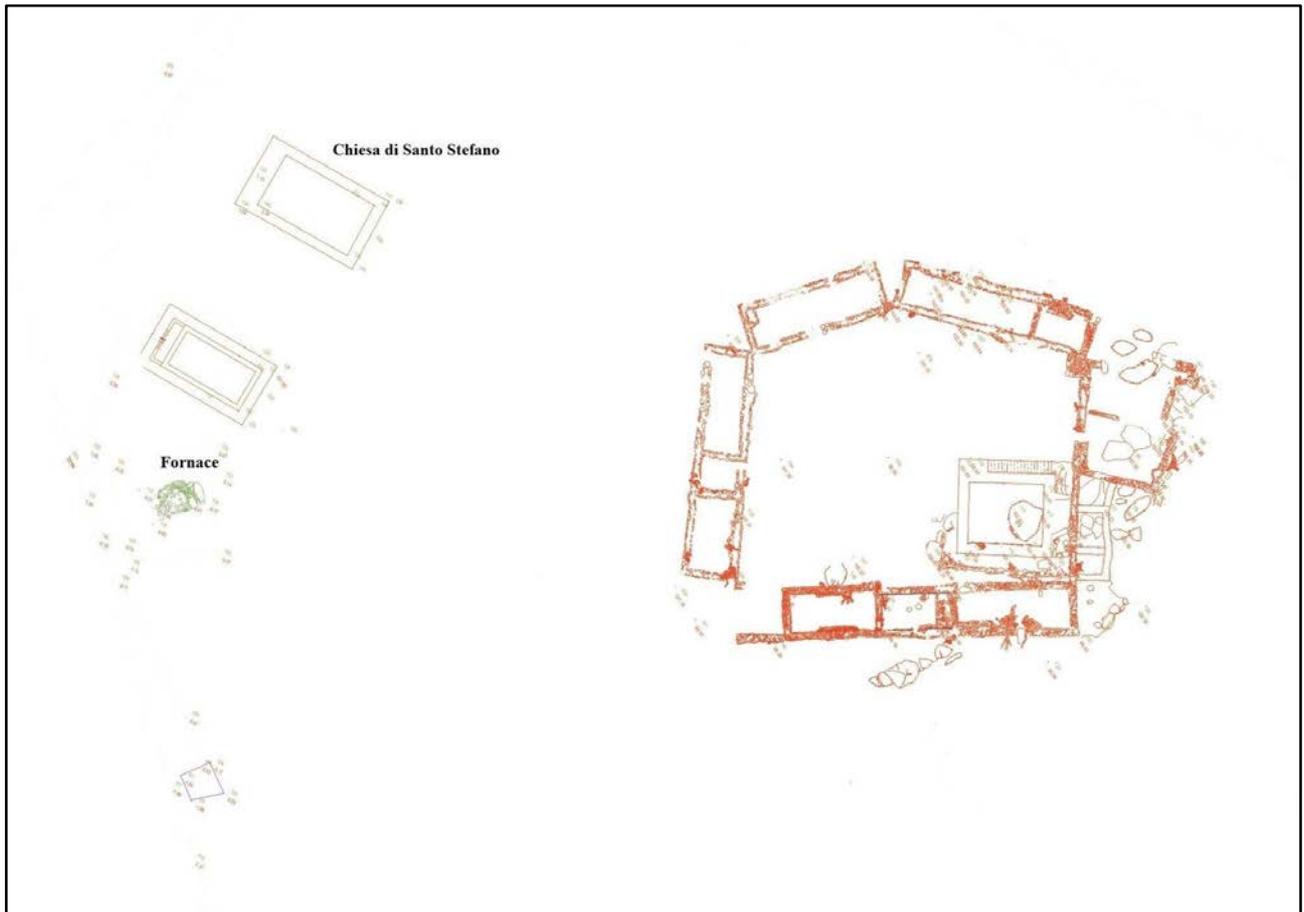


## ■ Description of the site

*Lu Palatzu di Baldu* is located in the territory of Luogosanto, in the area of *Santu Stevanu* (fig. 1), included in the Giudicato of Gallura during the Middle Ages. The latter was divided into several *curatoria*, including the ones bordering of Montanna and Balaiana, where the Luogosanto was placed, while the site has been placed as *Villa de Sent Steva*, attributed to the *curatoria* of *Balanyana*.

The lack of documents about the history of the building creates some interpretive problems about the matters that characterised it, favouring the birth of several legends that have been preserved to the present day. The history of the palace seems to be influenced, in fact, by popular tradition, perhaps built in the first quarter of the 13th century by Lamberto Visconti, to celebrate the birth of his first-born child Ubaldo, or in 1238 by the Giudice Giovanni to honour the memory of his father Ubaldo; the date of its construction is still uncertain, but could be placed between 12th and 13th century.





**Fig. 1** - Luogosanto, area of *Santu Stevanu*: site plan of *Lu Palatzu di Baldu*  
 (Graphic production by C. Cocco).

The complex of Lu Palatzu of Baldu which covers an area of 1,379 m<sup>2</sup> is characterised by a square tower (figs. 2-3) and by twenty or so rooms arranged around a large pentagonal courtyard, which may be accessed from the North-eastern side. The *donjon*, located in the South-eastern corner, stands out about 10 metres over the complex, but it is possible that in ancient times it was higher as, in addition to the three floors, it must have had a terrace, which ensured a good visibility over the surrounding area.



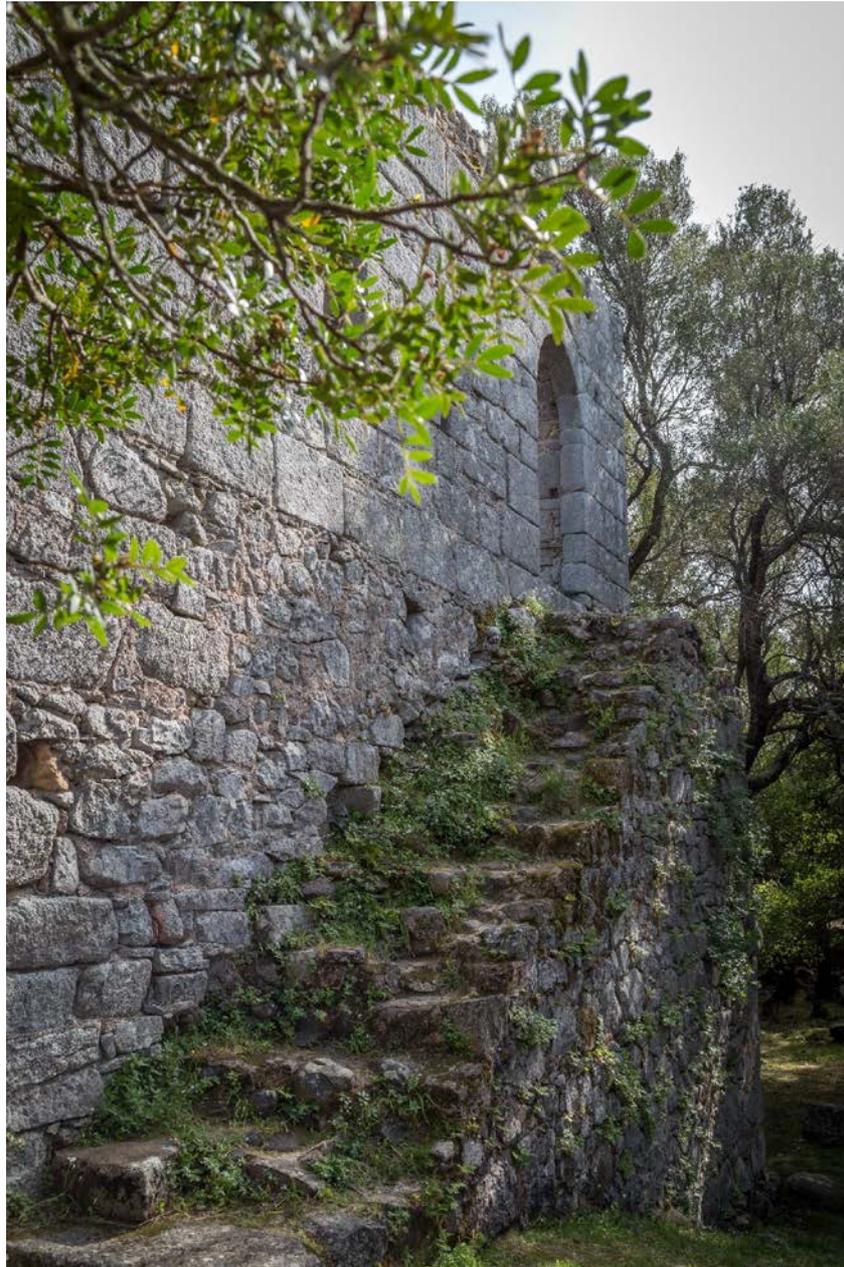


**Fig. 2** - The Palace of Baldu, seen from the South-East (photo by Unicity S.p.A.).



**Fig. 3** - The Palace of Baldu, seen from the West (photo by Unicity S.p.A.).

The three floors were served by a series of windows and an external staircase (fig. 4) that gave access to the main area. The lower level is externally provided with a talus while inside there is a large boulder.



**Fig. 4** - Palace of Baldu, view of the staircase located on the north side which allowed access to the main floor (photo by Unicity S.p.A.).

Up against the courtyard wall, seventeen rectangular rooms of various sizes were found, some of which would seem to be of a particular type, a “dual environment” characterised the joining of two rooms (one bigger and one smaller) via an entrance: this is the case in  $\kappa$  (kappa) and  $\iota$  (iota), (figs. 5-6);  $\pi$  (pi) and  $\alpha$  (alfa);  $\xi$  (csi) and  $\nu$  (ni).

Currently, investigations of the rooms in the buildings have shown different types of use, such as residential and crafts, found for example, in the several metal items found in rooms  $\beta$  (beta) and  $\gamma$  (gamma); but also in storerooms, kitchens, stalls and workshops. These activities, together with the special nature of the tower, such as the type of wall and the width of the openings, allowed identification of the settlement as an important administration centre for the Giudicato di Gallura, or, as the residence of one of the political and religious subjects, who played a decisive role in controlling the kingdom.



**Fig. 5** - The Palace of Baldu, rooms  $\iota$  and  $\kappa$ , view from the east (photo by Unicity S.p.A.).



**Fig. 6** - The Palace of Baldu, room κ, seen from the West (photo by Unicity S.p.A.).

The building was located in a position naturally defended both by the depression of the ground surrounding the complex, and by the presence of rocky outcrops of granite characterised by *tafoni* whose height, of more than 10 m, concealed the tower and its two floors on the east and south-east sides: the latter may well have acted as an actual fortification system.

Outside the houses on the western side, stretches of walls connected to the church of Santo Stefano have been found (figs 7-8); this was probably reconstructed between the 17th and 18th century over the one built in the Middle Ages, that served the villa of the same name (*Sant Steve*): the building today is single nave with a sloping roof, pointing East, although without an apse.



**Fig. 7** - Luogosanto, area of Santu Stevanu: church of Santo Stefano (photo by Unicity S.p.A.).



**Fig. 8** - Luogosanto, area of Santu Stevanu: excavation in the area behind the church of Santo Stefano (From Pinna, Corda a c.d.s., p. 150, fig. 7).

Not far from the church, archaeological investigations have brought to light other stretches of wall - probably a clue to the presence of buildings that have not yet been

identified - and a kiln (fig. 9), characterised by a circular structure, used to produce bricks and tiles: the terracotta items were used on the roofs of the buildings (fig. 10).



**Fig. 9** - Luogosanto, area of *Santu Stevanu*: the furnace during the excavations (From Pinna, Corda a c.d.s., p. 150, fig. 8).



**Fig. 10** - Palace of Baldu, bricks warped and melted together during firing  
(From Pinna, Corda a c.d.s., p. 152, fig. 10).

Other indicators of the production activities in the area have also been found, such as glass waste, production waste and a piece of granite with molten glass poured on it. The village of *Sent Steve*, which we know of because of fourteenth century sources, has been connected for a long time and by various authors with the rooms arranged around the courtyard, matching the village with this complex. On the basis of the dividing walls, identified to the west of *Lu Palatzu*, two hypotheses have arisen: the first suggests that the walls are a sort of extension of the village, larger than the known spaces; the second identifies it as a distinct town from the complex: the latter could identify a palace, around and outside of which there was the village characterised by dwellings and craft and subsistence-based structures.

## ■ Credits

Deepening card edited by Dr. Claudia Cocco and Dr. Francesca Collu

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